

record could have functioned just as well with the plot being either explained in the songs, or on the liner notes.

Are the voices really what one expects? Well, Frankie Miller sounds a little out of keeping with the rest. And perhaps the different voices add to the confusion of the record. After all *Tommy* survived very well with the basic Who sound throughout. Perhaps the whole album may have been more successful as a Steeleye Span concept? As Johnson and Knight do not seem to be songsmiths of the first order, some traditional melodies could possibly have been used to advantage.

It is super though to see Mary Hopkin back on vinyl. Sad to think all she does nowadays is the occasional single and backing vocals (e.g. on Bowie's *Low*).

The only rider that I could add is that with the paucity of intelligent children's records around, this could appeal strongly to imaginative under-12's, so it might pay parents and primary teachers who read *Rip It Up* to check this record out.

William Dart

#### New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival Various Artists 1976 Island

The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival is an annual event, commemorating the best of New Orleans' varied musical past and giving promise of the future. This double album concentrates on the rhythm and blues aspect of the festival, and it's extraordinarily fine.

The best music comes from the king of the Crescent City studios, Allen Toussaint, who gets a whole side to run through insistent versions of some of his best songs ('High Life', 'Play Something Sweet (Brickyard Blues)', 'Freedom for the Stallion'). Toussaint's influence isn't confined to his own performance, however. Lee Dorsey does the Toussaint-penned 'Workin' in a Coal Mine' and 'Holy Cow' and Ernie K-Doe has a fitful stab at recreating his 1961 hit 'Mother-in-Law', also a Toussaint composition.

K-Doe and Robert Parker turn in performances well below the standard set by their classic 60s singles, 'Mother-in-Law' and 'Barefootin'' respectively, but the other artists acquit themselves admirably. Irma Thomas is in fine, strident form on 'You can have my husband, but please don't mess with my man' and Texas bluesman Lightnin' Hopkins offers three of the most exciting performances of his long (and perhaps over-recorded) career.

The final two tracks are left to the man credited with inspiring New Orleans pianists from Fats Domino, through Toussaint to Dr John, and they're a revelation.

## SSik? Kiss?



Kiss  
Love Gun  
Casablanca

On browsing through a selection of children's records at the Mangere kindergarten, I came across what appears to be the latest offering from a talented foursome of actors in the States going by the collective name Ssik. Based on the Warren comic strips, the record is an original rock opera that tells the story of four uglies from an underground garage that menace eardrums, entice eyeballs and make a lot of money.

The opera is essentially a social comment designed to express, in a childish medium, the steady decline of today's living standards, inflation, the upsurge of suburban depression in the home and other related sociological elements of life in developed countries. Of course for your average 12 year old all this is incredibly boring so Ssik portray these topics with incredibly boring music. The effect is as one would expect — mass boredom.

The rest of the opera spells out a numbing plot, describing tortuous journeys through fantastic situations and yet as in the first song, echoing a continual, monotonous drivel. Absolutely effective. Incredible. And then of course there's the climax; the apex of satisfaction and pinnacle of relief.

The end.

Mike Chunn.

Professor Longhair, dubbed by Toussaint 'The Bach of Rock,' was 57 at the time 'Tipitina' and 'Mardi Gras in New Orleans' were recorded, but he could well be 157, so ghostly and eccentric is his piano and vocal style.

Toussaint opens this immensely enjoyable album with solid 70s rock; it seems appropriate that it should be left to Professor Longhair to ring down the curtain with an eerie breath of swamp wind.

Ken Williams

## Colin Hemmingsen's Column

What has the Union done for me? That's a question often asked by non members, and I can only reply, "much more — if YOU were a member". Every body of workers, professional or otherwise, Architects, Lawyers, Doctors, Teachers have their guild, association, federation or whatever, and they all recognise the necessity of being able to speak with one voice for their common good. Why should musicians be an exception? I think many musicians are put off by the word 'Union', which conjures up impressions of striking and militancy, so perhaps if it was called the 'Association of Musicians', or the 'Musicians' Federation' it would have more appeal. However, regardless of the name, the aims and purpose of the musicians Union would remain the same, that is to improve the conditions of employment for the working musician.

Some say, "But I don't need the Union, I get paid above award anyway". That may be so, but it's certainly not the rule and besides, if there was no Union, there would be no basic rate to rise above, 18-20 year olds would not be permitted to work in licensed premises and the Immigration department would not have an agreement with the Union to prevent an influx of overseas players taking work from New Zealand musicians, especially in licensed premises.

The Union handles approximately 30 disputes a year, but according to the National Secretary, Neil McGough, most of these arise because of musicians failing to make adequate contracts with their employers in the first place. The Union has a stack of standard contracts and letters of engagement available to all members as a safeguard for any contract, be it for an engagement of one day to one year. I don't know how many times I've heard musicians complain about the treatment received from employers, breaking contracts, lowering fees at the last minute, dismissing without adequate reason etc, etc. When I

suggest that they join the Union and then make a written complaint, they say, "great idea" and then do nothing. Of course the Union can do nothing about complaints it never hears.

I regard being a member of the Musicians' Union in the same tight as having my instruments insured — a necessity. And it's not only for my benefit, but for the benefit of my fellow musicians, "United we stand", etc, etc. I may not agree personally, with the basic rates as they stand now; generally I think they are too low when it is considered the outlay a musician has today in instruments, electrical equipment etc, but rates and conditions can only improve in direct proportion to the strength of the union.

Before you dismiss it as unnecessary, at least visit your local branch, ask them what they are doing, why they are doing it, how can they help you, and then make a balanced judgment for yourself. For example, are you aware of the basic rates for touring within New Zealand, how much should you be paid for rehearsals? Branches of the Musicians Union in Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill would be pleased to answer your queries. If you are not happy with the Union as it stands, attend the next Annual General Meeting and at least make your views known.

**Stips**

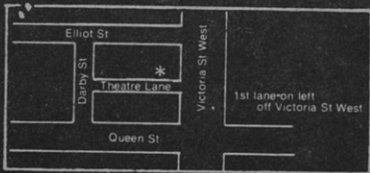
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Ponsonby Pearl's m'name... + I didn't crawl out of the rubble to watch people fight... tonight we'll sit around the fire together as one family... right!?



LATER THAT NIGHT...



We agree then, this is historically Ngati Whataua land... but there is room enough for all... in the morning we will begin to build a beautiful city from the lava rubble Rangitoto has given us...



MEANWHILE IN THE CAPITAL



BUT ON AUCKLAND'S RUINS...



AND AFTER A LONG DAYS WORK...

